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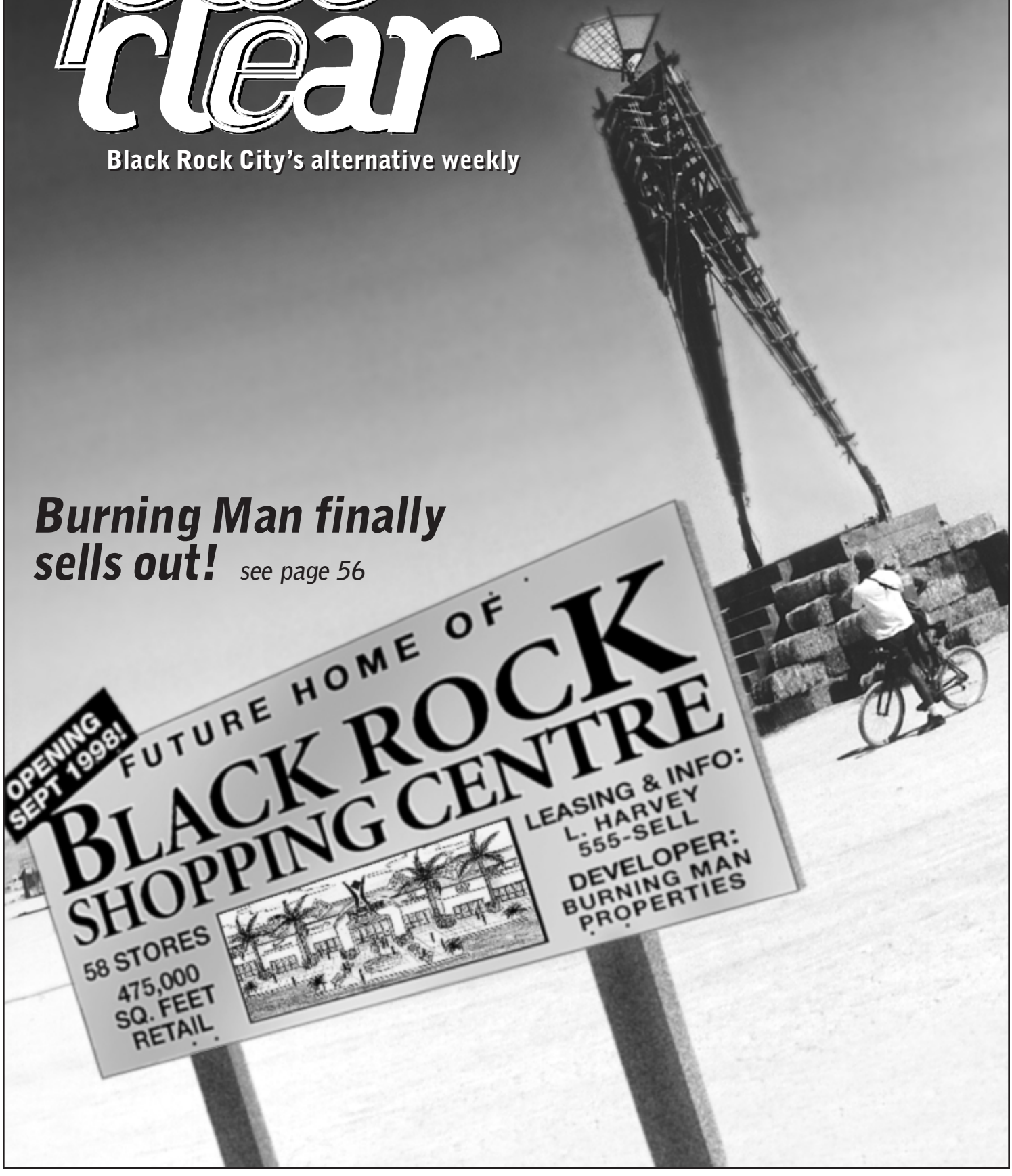
piss clear

Black Rock City's alternative weekly

Burning Man finally sells out!

see page 56



original photograph by Marc Geller, shopping center illustration by Jorge Alonso, signage and digital imaging by Adrian Roberts

Black Rock City's alternative weekly

Piss Clear

28 august 1997
issue number five
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Black Rock City, Nevada

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Lizard Man,
along with a lot of coffee

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Adrian Roberts

editor's rant

Heather Shirkey

Your editor, delivering last year's *Piss Clear*.

Every year, it's the same question, and every year, it's the same answer: Why is this publication entitled *Piss Clear?*

You see, when we first started publishing three years ago, this rag was originally meant as an irreverent survival guide to Black Rock City, filled with various tips and tricks to help make your Burning Man experience that much more enjoyable. Granted, we've mutated a bit over the years. But our number one survival tip has always remained the same: drink enough water so that you **piss clear.**

So what's in here?

Now that that's out of the way, allow me to welcome you to yet another Burning Man. Or perhaps this is your first one. No matter. Regardless if you're a "newbie" or an "old-timer," this particular issue of *Piss Clear* has got something for you. If you're new around here, check out Abby Normal's helpful "Expert advice for uptight Burning Man virgins" on the opposite page. Or Lizard Man's numerous rants on how to behave now that you're out here.

For old-school Burning Man veterans, there's a delightfully cynical piece from former *Black Rock Gazette* editor Stewart McKenzie, along with our infamous *What's Out, What's In* list. I'm also happy to report that our acerbic breeder sex advice columnist, Dan Bitter, is back. And although the *Black Rock Gazette* is introducing a sex columnist to their pages this year, just remember who on the playa did it first. It's not the first time the *Gazette* has appropriated one of our ideas, and I'm sure it won't be the last.

Piss piss piss!

Speaking of the mainstream media, is there a reason why we haven't been mentioned *by name* in any of the numerous articles about Burning Man which have run in various magazines and newspapers over the past two years? Interestingly, the few times we have been mentioned, it's always been rather vague, such as "the *Black Rock Gazette*'s main competitor" or something like that. Perhaps these publications are a bit squeamish about the word "piss" in our title? Piss piss piss! There are reasons why we are considered the "alternative" press in Black Rock City, and we are proud to be so.

Who we are not

Which brings me to another point. For some reason, many people seem to be under the false impression that just because we produce this glorious little rag every year, we are somehow affiliated with the Burning Man Project. I can't tell you the number of times over the past year I received letters or e-mail from people asking me what was up with this year's Burning Man. *As if we had a clue!* The truth is, if you want propaganda straight from the horse's mouth about BM, you're better off turning to the "officially party-sanctioned" *Black Rock Gazette* than you are to us. You see, we remain a fiercely-independent publication, with no ties to the Burning Man Project whatsoever. Hell, I feel lucky that they even let us have a theme camp this year.

Piss Clear theme camp?

Not that there's really much of a theme to our camp. But hell, we figured that if the *Black Rock Gazette* can get away with just parking their asses on Theme Camp Row every year without doing much, so could we. After all, we're the media! Ha!

For a while though, we weren't even sure if we were going to get anything together for the Piss Clear World Headquarters. Sure we had ideas, but like most great Burning Man concepts, they were all just a bit too high-maintenance to actually pull off, especially since most of them came to us at the last minute. But as you know, if it weren't for the last minute, a lot of things wouldn't get done, including this issue of *Piss Clear.* Fortunately, we did manage to come up with a theme camp concept that was cheap and easy to pull off. So look for the camp surrounded by the large origami on the fringes of the north end of Theme Camp Row. That's us. Stop by and say hi. We'll give you *Piss Clear* stickers.

How we avoid the Burning Man guilt trip

Yeah, we know it's not much, but at least we're participating in some small way. Besides, it helps alleviate the "Burning Man guilt trip" — you know, how if you don't "participate" in some way, you end up feeling like a free-loading loser. In fact, part of the reason we do *Piss Clear* every year is so we can feel like we're contributing something to the Black Rock community, but without actually having to do much once we get out here. All the hard work for us was done two weeks ago, so now we can just kick back and have fun. After all, we're on vacation!

So now we're a weekly

Yes, we made it easy for ourselves this time around. Unlike last year, *Piss Clear* is no longer a daily publication. Considering the number of people out here this year, it simply wasn't feasible to produce enough copies on a daily basis to satisfy Black Rock's reading public. Last year, we were only able to print 1000 copies a day, and sadly, many people missed out. If you were one of them, back issues are available — see the back cover for more info, or visit our web site: http://www.blue-period.com/pissclear

I sincerely hope you enjoy this particular edition of *Piss Clear.* And if you happen to see a cute, androgynous, gender-morphed freak with bobbed bleached-white hair running around carrying a *Piss Clear* backpack—well by all means, stop me and say hi!

A guide for uptight Burning Man virgins

by ABBY NORMAL

advice

With the swollen popularity of Burning Man, it's likely that many of this year's participants will be, A) first-timers, also referred to as "newbies," and, consequently, B) not quite mentally prepared.

More alarmingly, it's likely that there will be more than a few with something up their collective ass. But these folks have concerns too, and to them they're quite legitimate. So, in the spirit of community living, here are a few questions I've seen posed on the "I'm Scared of Burning Man" Internet discussion group, along with some refreshing common-sense replies.

Are eight gallons of water per day going to be enough?

Enough? Enough for what? Are you planning to stage your own version of *The Riverdance*? Common wisdom puts an average playaite's water needs at a gallon a day. Bring two per day just to be safe, three if worrying makes you sweat, and four in your case. If you insist on bringing more, you can always barter it to less-anal, less-prepared types than yourself — don't worry, you'll be outnumbered. Sell the leftovers only if you're ready to endure heaps of public scorn for competing with the local Gerlach high school kids.

How do I know when to dance, and if I'm cool enough?

Let me guess, you're the type that only dances about twice a year, and then only when the DJ plays a remix of "Bizarre Love Triangle," aren't you? Here are some pointers for knowing when to move and groove at B-man:

When the caffeine and alcohol in your body combine with sleeplessness, heat exhaustion and the effects of that little white tablet that other camper told you was aspirin, and you realize that you won't be able to sit still for the next eight hours, you might as well dance! However uncoordinated you are, dancing will still be less goofy-looking (and less dangerous) than anything else you might try to do at this point.

When you first alight from your SUV, do an "I've arrived!" dance. As in: whirl like a dust dervish, spinning and leaping around madly until you collapse and vomit in sheer nausea. All of this will probably go unnoticed, but it will give you an excellent crash-course in what to expect over the next few days. (Tip: try to avoid tented and staked areas when doing this, as guy wires can really interfere with clean lines of movement, and the attendant rope burns will probably be in all the wrong places.)

When someone mistakes you for a large piece of sheet-metal and begins pounding on you with huge mallets, go with it! Twisting and contorting in rhythm with the blows will lessen the impact, distributing the force more evenly over your body. Or, stand still if you want some bruises to serve as a unique body decoration: "Awesome, man, where'd you get that beautiful sunset tattoo?"

As for being "cool" enough — just using the word "cool" has already labeled you. But — and you may not like this if you're a tight-assed mofo — the only way to not be "cool" about dancing at B-man is to not dance at all.

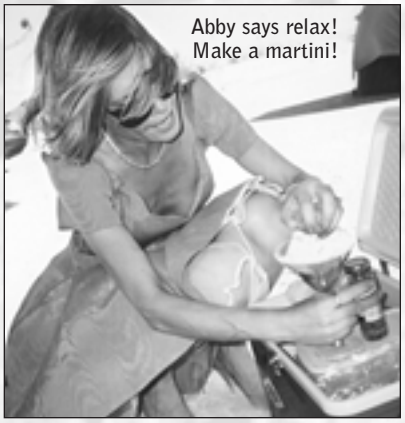
Which drugs should I avoid, and which ones will enhance my Burning Man experience?

Abby says avoid them all. Every single last one of them. Forget the legal ones: alcohol accelerates dehydration, and caffeine gives a false sense of strength, agility and endurance. Know your limits and stay alive! As for illegal drugs, we have it on good authority that the county law enforcement is intending to make up for its budget shortfall this year by handing out boo-coo citations for drug use, so expect John Law to be over this year's site like stink on shit.

Besides, what kind of advice-giver would I be to encourage you to take illegal substances, anyway? So pass up that scrumptious-looking pot brownie that would make for mind-blowing aardvarking with your new, libidinous, dazzingly-painted friend. Just say no to the speed that you need to keep you dancing for the next six hours while T'chkung and Beyond Race blow the PA system out. Turn your nose up at that tab of X, knowing that you don't really want to help build community by lying around in a pile with a constantly-changing group of loving, caring folks that you'd never get to feel so close to otherwise, confessing your deepest secrets and listening to theirs. And if somebody offers you something you've never heard of before — well, why'd you want to take it anyway? You think we're out here for new experiences, for chrissake?

What happens if someone hands me a pill and tells me to take it, and I do, and half an hour later I realize I've made a mistake?

Since by now it's already too late and you've disregarded my previous advice and gone ahead with this, ahem, foolish behavior, remember, you're surrounded by friends — all 10,000+ of them. There are no mistakes here (except for discharging firearms inside the City — you *did* lock away the .357, right?) So relax, go with the flow, and don't freak out. The Black Rock Rangers have enough to worry about, without bringing your sorry newbie ass back in from a bad trip. Go somewhere safe. Dance, even (especially!) if there's no music. Make a new friend. Make 10,000 of them. Do something you'd never think of in your ordinary life. See what the melting temperature of your new cell phone is. Put on lots of makeup, or false facial hair, or both, and admire yourself in your car's side-view mirror for hours, wondering if bisexuality is all it's cracked up to be. (It is. But you've gotta find that out for yourself — why not now?) *Live* for a change, Mr. Mitty.



Marc Geller

Hmmm... good advice for Burning Man in general, whether or not you've swallowed anything.

Can't we have more rules? Someone might get hurt.

How's your patience? Just wait about 10 years, when you can go to Disney-fucking-land for "Burning Man: The Ride." Rules to cover your every possible movement will be posted there in big block letters, for your own protection. Jesus fuckin' Christ. Whoever said "the only stupid question is the one that doesn't get asked" never had to do this job.

Don't let this last snarl fool ya, though. Abby wants everybody to have a great time on the playa this year, and to respect everybody else — no matter how clueless they may appear. Fun and freedom are what it's all about!

How to *not* have fun at Burning Man

by MANNY FESTO

A hangover in 100 degree heat is *not fun.*

Taking a back-flip off of a trampoline and hitting the playa floor, while being two hours away from the nearest orthopedic surgeon, is *not fun.*

Getting your dog boiled alive in a hot spring is *not fun.*

Getting yourself lit on fire because you're too wrapped up in your own self-induced hype to listen to good advice is *not fun.*

Letting people around you who are obviously wigged-out on hallucinogetic drugs play with Roman candles is *not fun.*

Bringing your dog out to the desert to have it become dehydrated, traumatized by loud noises, and then run away to go piss on someone's tent, is definitely *not fun.*

Playing chicken against a truck, while you're on a motorcycle, while both of you are in a duststorm, is *not fun.*

Spilling gasoline on bystanders or stuffing roadflares down your vehicle's carburator is *not fun.* Sure it's fun to watch, but it's still *not fun.*

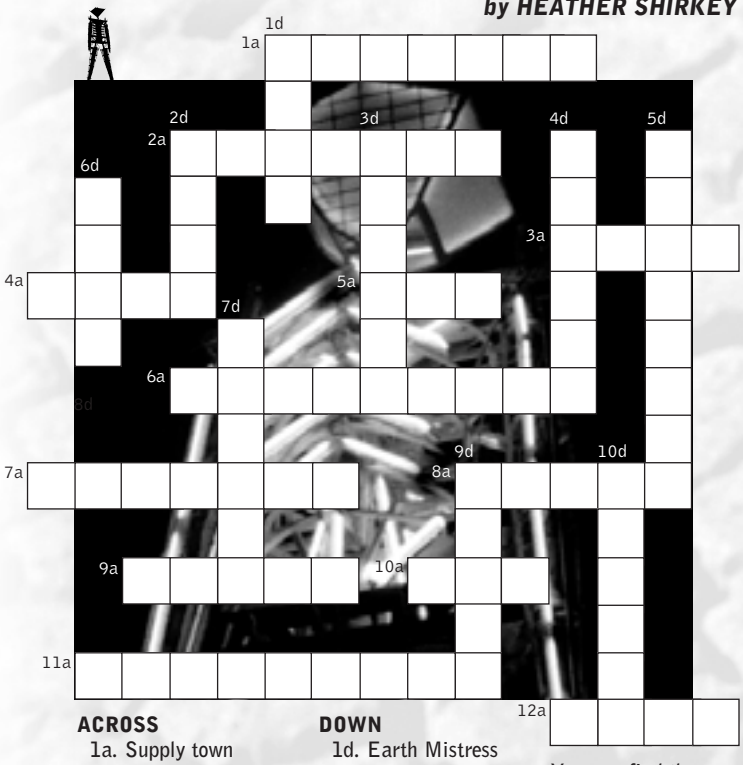
Driving over an occupied tent while high on speed-balls is *not fun.* No matter what kind of music you're listening to while doing it.

Overdosing on substances too exotic to pronounce, and taking a $5000 helicopter ride, is *not fun.*

Trying to do donuts with your car on a dry lake bed, but only managing to flip it seven times, crushing your pelvis in the process, is *not fun.*

Burning Man crossword

by HEATHER SHIRKEY



ACROSS

1a. Supply town
2a. Not public
3a. Stop here, gamble
4a. Forbidden friends
5a. Self-expression
6a. Bear babies, baby!
7a. Our protectors
8a. H^2O intake
9a. Die without
10a. Heat source
11a. Temporary domiciles
12a. Camping equipment

DOWN

1d. Earth Mistress
2d. Clear flow
3d. Playa product
4d. Fearless founder
5d. Daylight savings
6d. Man glow
7d. Hot spot
8d. Big nightlight
9d. Mind-altering
10d. First-timer

You can find the solution to this crossword puzzle at the *Piss Clear* World Headquarters camp, on the fringes of the north end of Theme Camp Row. It will probably be taped to one of the pieces of origami.

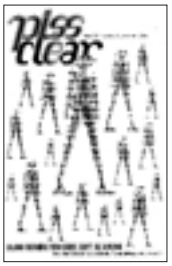
Back issues of PISS CLEAR

Yes, you can now finally order back issues of Black Rock City's only alternative publication. Each issue is in an eight-page 'zine format, and is available for **50 cents a piece,** plus **$1.00 for shipping and handling.** Yes, for a measly three bucks, you can get all four!

issue 1, 1995
☐ Our debut!

issue 2.1, 1996
☐ The music-and-more issue! Fashion tips! Rants! Haiku!

issue 2.2, 1996
☐ The hedonistic sex-and-drugs issue! Out/In list! Idiot Flesh! More!



issue 2.3, 1996
☐ The negative, cynical issue! More fashion! The Mermen!

name

address

city state zip

Send check, cash, or money order to:

Adrian Roberts
Piss Clear
1388 Haight St., Suite 232
San Francisco, CA 94117

Make checks out to: Adrian Roberts

Smile!

Chances are, you probably missed seeing the smiley face inside the Man's head light up last year. Don't feel bad though—the elaborate neon prank was only turned on once, on Saturday night, and only for about five seconds at that. Fortunately, *Piss Clear* photographer Heather Shirkey happened to be in the right place at the right time, and her swift shutter finger captured this fleeting image. Will the smiley make a return appearance this year?

Heather Shirkey

Anti-anti-Burning Man

by ADRIAN ROBERTS

last word

I'm going to risk sounding like Andy Rooney here, but... you know what really **pisses** me off? People who have **cynically** dismissed Burning Man this year, claiming that "it's gotten too **big,"** and that "it's not as cool as it used to be," and that "it's going to suck this year." **Whatever.**

Granted, last year **did** get a little out of hand, what with all the Medevacs flying in and the **yahoos** screaming "Show us yer tits!" from the backs of pick-up trucks, and all the **assholes** driving their cars around fucking **everywhere.** I mean, hell, two people **died** last year, giving credence to CNN's ridiculous description of Burning Man as "the world's most **dangerous** art festival."

But what I want to know is, where were all of these nay-sayers during Burning Man '95? **Okay,** so maybe nobody actually **died** two years ago, but everything that was sited as a problem at last year's BM existed *the year before.* Was I the **only** one who noticed?

That was the year our campsite got vandalized. We very nearly got **run-down** every single night by **cars** speeding off to Rave Camp. On top of that, "Fucking faggot!" epithets were hurled at me by backwards baseball cap-wearing yahoos. **That** was the year I realized that Burning Man had gone from being a beautiful experiment in utopian community, to **turning** into the world's largest **tailgate** party.

Which is not to say that, overall, I didn't have a good time. Okay, so sure, the **glow** from previous years had been **tarnished** a bit. Whatever. Instead of whining about it, I went along with it, with one **mantra** going through my mind: **Fucking adapt.**

So last year, I went to Burning Man with diminished expectations. And you know what? I had a **fucking** blast. With the power of negative thinking — "Yeah, it's probably going to **suck** but I'm going anyway" — I was surprised that I **actually** had a great time! Oh sure, the same problems were there. But at least I was mentally prepared for them. I **adapted.** And isn't that what **survival** is all about?

That's why I'm **really** tired of all the Burning Man cynicism that's currently in **vogue** among BM old-timers. I mean, this being my **fifth** year here, I suppose I qualify as an old-timer myself. But at least I'm not whining about how "it used to be **so** much cooler..." *Of course* it used to be cooler. **Going** to Burning Man is like doing Ecstacy. You have **no** idea what to expect the first time, and then it turns out to be this mind-blowingly **awesome** experience. So you **keep** coming back, hoping to relive that initial **ecstatic** high. And while it's still **loads** of fun, it's nowhere *near* as good as it was the first time. **Oh well.** That's life.

In other words, get **over** it. Yes, we all know Burning Man was cooler five years ago. So what? Because no matter **how** you slice it, being out here still **beats** Real Life by a long shot.